Hippotherapy Practice and Safety Patterns for Older Adults
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Problem

- Hippotherapy is an equine-assisted service that uses the movement of a horse to influence treatment outcomes.²
- The efficacy of hippotherapy has been widely demonstrated across pediatric client populations.
- The use of hippotherapy for older adult clients is less understood and documented.

Objective

To describe the practice and safety patterns of clinicians who use hippotherapy with older adults.

Methods

- A cross-sectional Qualtrics¹ survey was distributed via a listserv to clinicians registered with the American Hippotherapy Association, Inc.
- Survey included: number of clinicians who worked with older adults, length of hippotherapy sessions, use of safety equipment, and number of incidents or adverse occurrences reported.
- Descriptive statistics were conducted about the practice and safety patterns.

Practice Patterns

- Hippotherapy sessions lasted an average of 38.8 minutes.
- Clinicians provided an average of 8.3 sessions per week.
- 8 out of 132 clinicians who completed the survey reported incorporating older adults in practice.
- These 8 clinicians included 1 occupational therapist, 1 speech-language pathologist, and 6 physical therapists.

Safety Patterns

- Clinicians who incorporated older adults reported 0 total incidents or adverse occurrences.
- These clinicians had the highest reported use of safety equipment out of all who responded to the survey.

Conclusions

- To our knowledge, this is the first study to describe practice and safety patterns among clinicians who work with older adults.
- These efforts may inform the use of hippotherapy for the aging population.

Next Steps

- Additional qualitative data to assess the quality of hippotherapy care for older adults.
- Additional studies focused specifically on clinicians who incorporate older adults

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge Dr. Peters and Erdman for devising the project and collecting the survey data.

References

1. Open camera app from cell phone.
2. Hold device so that QR code appears in camera app.
3. Tap the notification to open link associated with QR code.